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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-ninth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 751st MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 15 January 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. DOEK

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES

Second periodic report of Lebanon

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4)

Second periodic report of Lebanon (CRC/C/70/Add.8; HRI/CORE/1/Add.27/Rev.1; CRC/C/Q/LEB/2; written replies of the Government of Lebanon to the questions in the list of issues (document without a symbol distributed in the meeting room in English only))

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Lebanon took places at the Committee table.

2. Mr. NEHME (Lebanon) said that his country continued to be profoundly affected by the impact of the civil war, which had lasted from 1975 until 1990, and Israeli occupation, which had ended as recently as May 2000. The resulting loss and destruction had led to many internal difficulties and seriously undermined the economy. Lebanon had signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child without reservation in 1991, and governmental and non-governmental agencies were paying increasing attention to its provisions. However, problems concerning implementation persisted, especially owing to the cultural, political and economic context in the country.

3. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ said that the report was very interesting because of its analytical, intellectual and sometimes even philosophical approach. However, it had not strictly followed the Committee's guidelines. In particular, it had failed to address the issues from the perspective of the best interests of the child. Rather than seeing the child as a subject of rights, the report presented children as passive elements within systems of traditional values. While she welcomed the provision of statistical information, data had not been recorded in the disaggregated form preferred by the Committee, which made it difficult to assess. There was not enough information concerning how general principles and civil rights and freedoms had been included in legislation and subsequently implemented. The Committee would also appreciate more details on the situation of Palestinian children. She was pleased to note the priorities that the Government had set with regard to the inclusion of children's rights in general legislation, improvements in access to primary education and health care, child labour rules and the reform of juvenile justice.

4. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to ask questions concerning general measures of implementation and the definition of the child.

5. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ said she would be interested to learn more about the outcome of the considerations of the Higher Council for Childhood. It was indicated in the report that although elements of a national strategy had been developed, that strategy had yet to be implemented. The existence of the necessary political will and availability of scientific and practical information concerning the child population were elements referred to in the report as still being necessary before specific objectives and resource targets could be set. However, a strategy for implementing the Convention was required even before the calculation of budgetary

implications. Paragraph 31 of the Committee's concluding observations regarding the initial report of Lebanon (CRC/C/15/Add.54), referred to the need for a more comprehensive social policy, including implementation of the National Plan of Action for Child Survival, Protection and Development. She asked whether the delegation could give a clearer impression of its view of the holistic nature of the Convention.

6. Further details of the status and scope of the personal status laws would be welcome. The core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.27/Rev.1) indicated that an unwritten national Covenant had been adopted in 1943, based on the principle of co-existence between the country's religious communities. It also stated that all treaties duly ratified by Lebanon acquired mandatory force of law. She failed to understand how the 15 different justice systems operating under the personal status laws could be reconciled with those criteria, particularly as many laws, such as those relating to the marriageable age, were inconsistent with the Convention. She asked whether a dual system was applied in which the Convention took precedence and the personal status laws had secondary importance, and whether there were plans to change those aspects that were inconsistent with the Convention.

7. While she appreciated the financial constraints on Lebanon owing to its debt repayments, she drew attention to article 4 of the Convention, which stipulated that Governments should afford priority to children's rights to the maximum extent of their available resources. She asked for more information concerning any plans, including fiscal adjustment, that the Government had for improving the economic situation. The unequal distribution of wealth also stood in the way of both political stability and the enhancement of the rights of children. A universal strategy for families would be one way of dealing with that problem.

8. Ms. CHUTIKUL inquired about the relationship between the Higher Council for Childhood and the hundreds of local bodies referred to in the report concerning the enforcement of child rights, as well as its relationship with the Parliamentary Committee on the Rights of the Child, particularly with regard to the development of legislation. She would appreciate further details of the role played by the Lebanese Commission on the Rights of the Child, which had received only a passing mention in the report. Could the delegation explain why plans to establish an economic and social council had failed to be implemented, and whether they would be pursued? If so, how would the work of that body relate to that of the Higher Council for Childhood? She would welcome information concerning progress on the establishment of effective monitoring mechanisms and the reported achievements of the Higher Council for Childhood. She failed to understand how the Higher Council could take on an effective monitoring role, since 10 of its members were representatives of government ministries.

9. She understood that a national plan had been developed with a view to presentation at the United Nations special session on children in May 2002. However, the scope of the follow up to the World Summit for Children did not cover all elements of the Convention. Furthermore, even the limited national plan did not appear to have been implemented. She welcomed the efforts made by the Government to cooperate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the field. Nevertheless, she would like to learn whether the Government had created an umbrella organization to coordinate NGO activities.

10. Ms. AL-THANI said that in the context of Lebanon's emergence from civil war, the Government appeared to want to concentrate on rebuilding infrastructure, for instance with a view to reactivating the tourist industry. Progress on social issues seemed relatively limited. Although efforts were being made in that area, the results remained unclear. She asked for clarification of budgetary allocations to the social sector.

11. She expressed concern that girls as young as nine years of age continued to be eligible for marriage. Despite the existence of different religious and ethnic communities, there was no justification for such a low marriageable age. The age should be set at 18 years throughout the country. She would appreciate an explanation of why the minimum working age had been set at 13 years, which was inconsistent with the standards established by the International Labour Organization (ILO), as well as with the provisions of the Convention.

12. Ms. EL GUINDI said that while she appreciated Lebanon's complicated cultural and religious situation, economic problems and need to recover from civil war, those factors did not provide justification for failings in the approach to child rights. In the context of separate laws for different ethnic and religious groups, she asked whether there were plans to standardize laws, for instance to provide a single definition of the child, or to establish a minimum marriageable age for all. She asked for further evidence that child rights remained a priority for the Government in budgetary terms, and for clarification of the relationship between the various bodies with responsibility for children's issues.

13. Ms. KARP, while acknowledging the challenge faced by the country in its need to rebuild in the wake of a protracted civil war and ensure that all segments of society could express their views, suggested that it was time to admit children to that renewal process. Had the authorities attempted to discover what children themselves considered to be priorities for implementing the Convention? If so, had their views been taken into account?

14. The existence of 15-18 different religious and ethnic communities meant that the personal status laws could not be enforced equally for all children, resulting in discrimination based on differing attitudes. She urged the authorities to enact one set of legislation that would cover all children without discrimination.

15. Given the structural problems that plagued the Higher Council for Childhood and the budgetary implications of its programmes, she suggested that its membership should include a representative of the Ministry of Finance. She was curious as to the philosophy behind the idea that the Council, a body for coordination among ministries, was also viable as an ombudsman, which should be a totally independent body. In conclusion, she wished to know whether any improvements had been noted since the Council had begun its ombudsman duties, and to whom it reported.

16. Ms. OUEDRAOGO asked whether there was a centralized system for collecting statistics that covered all aspects of the Convention. She regretted that no reference had been made to Palestinian children in the report and wished to know what their status was with regard to

implementation of the Convention. Were they looked after by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) alone, or did the Government contribute to their health and education? Also, were there plans to continue awareness and training programmes on the Convention on a permanent basis in order further to enhance its dissemination?

17. She inquired whether the decision to provide free education had been implemented, and if so, how, and whether it covered all children of school age. What strategy had been used to reduce the incidence of early marriage and marriage between blood relations and what obstacles had been encountered, since it was mostly an issue of changing attitudes? She recommended that the age of compulsory education, 12, should be urgently brought into line with the minimum age for work, which was set at 13.

18. The CHAIRPERSON said it appeared clear that the Government relied heavily on the private sector and NGOs to provide for children's needs. What exactly was the Government's philosophy with regard to State responsibility? While it was normal for certain activities to be delegated to private bodies, the Government should not abdicate its responsibility and should at least furnish those bodies with the necessary financial and human resources. What, then, was the policy regarding the role of the business sector and NGOs in implementing the Convention? And how did the delegation see that role in practical terms? He would also appreciate information about the role of industry, including the tobacco industry, in which some 25,000 children worked during the summer months.

19. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ asked whether any agreements had been concluded with the private sector and NGOs. Given the extent of privatization in the country, any mechanism Lebanon had for evaluating the standard and quality of private-sector services might serve as a model for other countries.

20. Ms. CHUTIKUL inquired about the care provided by NGOs. Inasmuch as their contracts appeared to be automatically renewed, how did the Government monitor them?

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 11.15 a.m.

21. Mr. NEHME (Lebanon), responding to views expressed about the structure of the report, explained that at the time the initial report had been prepared in 1993, the war had not long been over and no national statistics had been compiled. The authorities had therefore decided to use the second periodic report as a baseline report addressed not only to the Committee, but also to Lebanese society and decision-makers, reflecting the views of the Government, civil society and academics. It also contained an in-depth analysis and a wealth of information aimed at a wider readership.

22. With regard to the best interests of the child, in the preparation of the report a great deal of research had been conducted on the Convention itself in order to grasp its philosophy and analyse the situation of children from its perspective. Internal discussions had been held to

ensure that the report advocated a new way of looking at children, as entitled to rights. Now that much had been achieved in terms of traditional rights, efforts would focus on children's participation and on less traditional rights, in pursuance of internationally established goals. The report was intended as an advocacy tool for narrowing the gap between traditional rights and the rights set forth in the Convention.

23. There was necessarily a time-gap between policy formulation and implementation. For that reason and also for lack of resources, little progress had been made in enforcing the laws on compulsory education and child labour.

24. A political issue affecting the implementation of the Convention was the situation of Palestinians in Lebanon. Lebanon had been involved in the Middle East conflict and had been under occupation. For the previous three decades Palestinians had been a part of Lebanese society and political life, which had obviously engendered problems. No clear separation had thus far been made between the political and the social and humanitarian aspects of the Palestinian's situation in Lebanon. The authorities had decided not to cover them in the report because in terms of services they fell within UNRWA's mandate, and in any event a separate report had already been submitted on Palestinian refugees.

25. The regional and global attitude in the current peace process failed to respect the rights of Palestinians in Lebanon, including children, to return to their country. The entire peace process was geared to encouraging Palestinians to stay where they were. The Government was reluctant to take any action that might appear to be at odds with that policy. A more just solution that included the right of repatriation for Palestinians would resolve the situation.

26. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Lebanese Government appeared to be in the ambivalent position of considering that Palestinians in Lebanon should enjoy the right of repatriation, while practising a policy of non-integration so as not to affect their enjoyment of that right. The Palestinians were thus in limbo: they were UNRWA's responsibility, but continued to live in refugee camps. Although the Government had succeeded in enrolling some Palestinians in schools outside the camps, many had not been admitted. Large numbers were unregistered, pursuant to the Government's policy that only Palestinians already in Lebanon in 1956 should be registered. That was not necessarily the fault of the Lebanese Government. However, he would like to know whether it assumed responsibility for improving the lot of those unfortunate children or relied solely on UNRWA for the provision of services.

27. Mr. NEHME (Lebanon) said the fact that most services, even for Lebanese children, were provided by the private sector did not mean that the Government ignored the children. The same was true of Palestinian children. There was no specific policy to disregard them; however, the Government saw the enforcement of their rights as UNRWA's responsibility.

28. Where the social situation was concerned, following the zero or even negative growth posted by Lebanon in the period 1996-2000, it was in urgent need of economic reconstruction. That having been said, the global environment was hostile to the country's needs, making it

difficult for the Government to obtain assistance for implementing important social programmes. While the Government was in favour of greater involvement on the part of the State as a whole and the Ministry of Social Affairs in particular, it was also subject to a combination of national policies and international pressures, for example to open up its markets.

29. On the cultural front, time-honoured values posed difficulties, which concerned not only children, but also the status of women and the family, to which the status of children was closely linked.

30. In answer to a question about early marriage, he said that there was no strict definition of the minimum age for marriage, despite the existence of personal status laws. Early marriage continued to take place in certain communities, usually for reasons of poverty rather than religion, although the practice was in decline. In fact, the average age for marriage had become so high (28 years for women and 31 years for men), as a direct consequence of reproductive health and awareness raising campaigns as well as changing social and economic factors, that it had become a cause for concern. While the Government recognized that legislation on marriage had to adapt to the evolving social trends, it was clear that any changes affecting social and cultural practices had to be introduced gradually: the Government had recently advocated a non-mandatory law on civil marriage but had met with strong opposition from all parties. It must be noted that the matter was not high on the Government's agenda.

31. Public debt, two thirds of which was domestic, continued to be an enormous burden, amounting to approximately 150 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP). In the last decade, between 40 and 45 per cent of the national budget had been allocated to debt servicing. The Government's priority had therefore been to achieve economic growth. Such growth would inevitably have a positive impact on the status of children; nevertheless, despite relatively high social spending, amounting to 20 per cent of Lebanon's GDP, and the introduction of numerous sectoral policies, no real social strategy existed. As long as that was the case, it would be impossible to reap the real benefits of economic growth. However, two social funds had been established in Lebanon, one with the World Bank and one with the European Union, and the Government was working closely with various United Nations agencies, including UNICEF, to develop programmes to allow for a shift from a sectoral approach to human development to an integrated and coordinated approach.

32. Two thirds of social funding came from the private sector. It was clear that the distribution of funding had to be more balanced, but Lebanon had a history of attention being focused on the private sector. For example, two-thirds of children went to private schools and 95 per cent of hospital care was provided by the private sector.

33. The Ministry of Social Affairs, responsible for drafting plans for development and social welfare, in particular providing health, education and welfare services to children, was undergoing a total reform. The whole system of social services for children would be changed so that priority would be given to providing assistance to children in their homes rather than sending them to institutions. A strict set of guidelines would be prepared concerning the categories of children that could be placed in institutions. One particularly important project that

had recently been initiated, financed by the World Bank, focused on amending the nature of contracts between the Ministry of Social Affairs and the non-governmental sector. NGOs played an important role in providing social services in Lebanon but it was important that the Ministry should be responsible for setting criteria to monitor and renew the contracts, defining priorities and setting standards for the services provided.

34. In reply to a question by Ms. Ouedraogo about the varying age of compulsory education, he explained that a new educational curriculum had been introduced, providing new definitions of the stages of education. Legislation had been amended as a first step to imposing compulsory basic education (to the age of 15 years) in accordance with the new structure. At the present time, education was compulsory at the first stage of basic education, known as primary education, and continued as previously designated (to the age of 12). That designated age, however, would be raised in due course when the new structure was in place. The Ministry of Labour had introduced a law in the intermediary phase, under which the minimum age for employment was 13 years. The variation in ages was a result of a lack of coordination between the ministries. Efforts were being made to bring the minimum age of education into line with the minimum age for work, at the highest possible age; the issue was high on the agenda of both the Government and NGOs. In answer to a question by Ms. Tigerstedt-Tähtelä, he said that appropriate legislation would be introduced.

35. Ms. HAMAOUI (Lebanon) said that there had been a reduction in the number of consanguineous marriages since the introduction of legislation making blood tests before marriage compulsory. Awareness-raising campaigns about the problems associated with such marriages had also been conducted. On the issue of early marriages, a programme on reproductive health was under way, targeting young people, which had seen some positive results. She pointed out that the personal status laws were not the only area of legislation affecting children; labour law and civil law also provided some protection for children.

36. The Higher Council for Childhood had been formed to monitor implementation of the Convention; it had a consultative role and was not an executive body. There were strict criteria dictating who could be represented on the Council; almost all the ministries involved in the implementation of the Convention were represented, as were agencies such as UNICEF and Save the Children. In Lebanon, NGOs formed unions, which meant that the Council could work with hundreds of local bodies. Efforts were being made to secure the involvement of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other international organizations. The Council was able to suggest legislative amendments to the Parliamentary Committee on the Rights of the Child, which in turn submitted those suggestions to the Legislative Committee in Parliament. She explained that the Lebanese Committee on the Rights of the Child was a non-governmental body and included in its membership various representatives of NGOs. The Council was endeavouring to ensure that all the NGOs took a rights-based approach. An action plan was being prepared as a result of a recent conference organized with the help of UNICEF, at which four national priorities had been set: child labour, early child development, children in difficult situations and juvenile law. A national information centre and database were to be created as a tool for strategic planning and to facilitate monitoring.

37. In Lebanon, there was no ombudsman as such for the rights of the child. The Council, however, through the services provided by its members at grass-roots level, was able to monitor the situation of children nationwide, and was able to receive complaints.

38. The CHAIRPERSON said that he would welcome further information about the channels available to children who wished to file a complaint. How did the Council deal with such complaints?

39. Ms. KARP asked whether the State party intended to establish an ombudsman.

40. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ said she would appreciate further information about the mandate of the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee.

41. Ms. HAMAOUI (Lebanon) said that the Government was always keen to improve the situation of children in Lebanon and was certainly prepared to consider the introduction of an ombudsman if the Committee considered it necessary. At present, a child could file a complaint with an NGO or with one of the Government's development centres nationwide; the case would be reported to the Council, which had the authority to carry out an investigation.

42. Mr. NEHME (Lebanon) said that since the publication of the second periodic report, a social and economic council had been created in Lebanon to address all economic and social issues in the State party, consisting, inter alia, of representatives of NGOs, trade unions and chambers of commerce and independent advisors. The Council had a consultative role and provided a platform for dialogue between all interested parties. Issues on children fell within its mandate. Although it was not yet in operation, the Council served as a good advocate for an integrated social perspective.

43. NGOs had been working in Lebanon for many years in the area of social welfare. Traditionally they had not adopted a rights-based approach, but many new children's rights organizations had been created and such an approach was becoming increasingly important. Most complaints were channelled through NGOs, although occasionally ministries became involved. For example, several years earlier, a medical doctor had notified the police of a particularly serious case of child abuse; the Ministry of Social Affairs had held an investigation and had represented the child in the judicial process. However, it was true that there was no structured system for channelling complaints. The State party took note of the concerns expressed by the Committee members in that regard.

44. To the best of his knowledge the mandate of the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee was to verify compliance with the human rights conventions.

45. Ms. HAMAOUI (Lebanon), replying to a question by Ms. Karp about the representation of the Ministry of Finance on the Higher Council for Childhood, said that the Ministry of Finance was not exclusively responsible for determining the budget of each ministry; on the whole, ministries were responsible for organizing their own budget and programmes.

46. The CHAIRPERSON said that further information would be appreciated about measures taken to promote the dissemination of information, the training of professionals, especially in the juvenile justice system, and awareness-raising activities about the rights of the child. It would also be useful to know whether any programmes had been envisaged to address the problem of the poor distribution of wealth in Lebanon.

47. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ said that, according to paragraph 131 of the State party's second periodic report, reconstruction spending and funding were separate from the general budget. What was the source of that funding? It would be interesting to learn what role the banks played in the reconstruction programme. Was the reconstruction work carried out by private or public companies?

48. Ms. OUEDRAOGO asked whether there was a national structure which allowed children to consider issues relating to their rights, discuss problems of direct concern to them and make recommendations which such national bodies as the Higher Council for Childhood or the Parliamentary Committee on the Rights of the Child took into account.

49. Ms. CHUTIKUL inquired about the quality of the services rendered by NGOs, in particular with regard to children in institutions.

50. Mr. NEHME (Lebanon), replying first to a question about social disparities, said that such disparities were in fact considerable and should in his view be dealt with through a national strategy to develop better social policies. A number of regional development programmes were addressing the problem of regional disparities; in so doing, they indirectly tackled social disparities as well. Programmes for the poor northern areas would start later in the year, and a regional strategy for southern Lebanon was being planned, but was facing problems with financing. Recently, the Government's Council for Reconstruction and Development had published a three-year plan which took up the issue of disparities at regional and national level. A number of social programmes were also being carried out.

51. Reconstruction was an extrabudgetary expense, and was addressed through the Council for Reconstruction and Development. Funding came from both the public and private sector, primarily from domestic or foreign loans, as well as occasional grants and financing from the banking sector in the form of treasury bonds.

52. With regard to the participation of children, a Children's Parliament had been held in the Chamber of Parliament and had formulated recommendations. In some cities, children's municipal parliaments had been elected. The issue of children's participation was always present in NGO activities. All summer camps taught children to express themselves and make their views known.

53. One of the main priorities of the Ministry of Social Affairs was to revise its entire system for monitoring social institutions, particularly social welfare bodies. It was estimated that the social welfare services would be fully computerized within the next two years. The system would then be closely monitored on the basis of strict criteria.

54. Ms. HAMAOUI (Lebanon), replying to a question on training, said that a programme was being conducted in conjunction with UNICEF on the training of trainers in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Further training was planned. The Convention was also taught in summer camps; its incorporation in the school curricula had helped children learn about their rights. There had been a number of successful television broadcasts on the Convention with the participation of children themselves.

55. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to ask questions concerning general principles, civil rights and freedoms, and family environment and alternative care.

56. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ said that children in Lebanon apparently had little say in decisions affecting their lives. Pursuant to the Convention, decisions should always be taken in children's best interests, and they must be able to make their views heard. The Lebanese family-centred tradition was a good one, but should be made less restrictive. It was within the family that children should learn to express their views. She also asked whether there were any NGOs founded and run by children or whether such organizations were prohibited. More generally, did children enjoy freedom of expression, thought, conscience, religion and association and the right to privacy, as set out under the Convention?

57. She also inquired whether the practice of honour killing still existed in Lebanon. It was her understanding that that crime did not receive sufficient attention by the police and the courts. Was it defined as murder in the criminal code? She sought clarification from the delegation on reports that the courts dealt leniently with male relatives who had committed such murders and asked what Lebanon was doing to put an end to such practices.

58. On civil rights and freedoms, she asked whether legislation had been enacted allowing children to acquire the nationality of the mother and whether Lebanon had formulated any reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

59. With regard to article 37 (d) of the Convention, she sought the delegation's comments on reports that children had been subjected to torture and cruel treatment at the hands of Lebanese security forces during incommunicado detention.

60. Concerning violence and corporal punishment (art. 19), she had the impression that family violence against children, including sexual abuse, was a taboo subject in Lebanon. Did the Criminal Code still permit corporal punishment?

61. Ms. CHUTIKUL also raised the issue of the nationality of children of Lebanese women married to foreigners. The children of single mothers whose husbands had left them were often denied access to social services. She called upon the Government of Lebanon to help those children and encouraged it to withdraw its reservation to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on that question.

62. Children's institutions were meant to look after orphans, whereas in reality, very few of the children in them had actually lost their parents. Tearing children away from their families and placing them in institutions was a violation of articles 5, 9 and 18 of the Convention. She urged Lebanon to explore possibilities for allowing such children to remain in their families, to which assistance could then be provided.

63. Referring to taboos on discussion of violence and sexual abuse against children, she said that those issues had to be dealt with in the open. She asked the delegation to comment.

64. Ms. EL GUINDI asked whether children born in Palestinian families received birth certificates and all the benefits that other children had. She also inquired what legislation protected children born out of wedlock and what the attitude of Lebanese society was towards corporal punishment. What was the Government's policy on protecting children against corporal punishment in the family and in schools?

65. Ms. AL-THANI sought information about machinery for monitoring adoptions. She asked whether the delegation could provide statistics on international adoptions and on action to ensure the protection of such children. How could Palestinian children born in Lebanon after 1956 live normal lives, travel or obtain health care without Lebanese citizenship?

66. Ms. KARP said that Palestinians had entered Lebanon some 50 years earlier. As they did not have a sense of belonging to society and as most of them lived below the poverty level, she wondered whether such a source of instability was really in the long-term interest of a healthy Lebanese society. What was the Lebanese Government's position on that issue?

67. In her understanding there was a ministerial prohibition on the use of violence in school as a disciplinary measure. She inquired whether complaints were heard and followed up and whether action was taken against teachers who resorted to violence as a disciplinary measure or committed sexual abuse. Were there any guidelines or procedures for dealing with such complaints? More generally, she asked where the Lebanese Government stood on violence against women in society, violence against children in the family being closely related to the issue of battered women, whether shelters existed for such women and whether there had been any cases in which investigations had been conducted and criminal proceedings instituted. What was the attitude of the police? Were women encouraged to articulate their problems and bring such cases of violence to the attention of administrative or the social structures equipped to deal with them?

68. Ms. OUEDRAOGO asked what measures were being taken to combat discrimination against disabled children, which persisted despite new legislation to protect such persons.

69. There did not seem to be a sufficient number of television broadcasts for children. She was also concerned about the screening of executions on television, which might be traumatic for children and encourage them to be violent.

70. There had been reports of large numbers of illegal international adoptions. She inquired whether Lebanon was planning to ratify the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption and take the necessary measures to ensure better protection of children in cases of international adoption.

71. She asked what efforts had been made by the Government to establish norms and monitor children living in religious institutions. Were existing norms consistent with the relevant provisions of the Convention?

72. She would like to know what action was envisaged to improve conditions for children in day centres, where there was said to be insufficient care and a shortage of qualified staff, as well as considerable disparities in the services provided.

73. The CHAIRPERSON asked the delegation to explain the statistics provided on the four categories of children in institutions. He also sought details of any action planned to deal with violence in the media.

74. According to paragraph 242 of the report, participation of pupils in the school administration was limited, and he asked whether there had been any change in that situation recently. For example, were there school councils made up of pupils? If so, were they limited to secondary schools, or could primary schools also create such bodies?

75. He inquired about the role of religious groups in caring for children whose parents were unable to do so, whether such groups could intervene in families in difficulty or whether that was a matter for the courts and whether any rules regulated the work of religious groups in adoption matters.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.